SOME FURTHER NOTES ON SAXON CHURCHES: BEING THE ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF THE ARCHITECTURAL SECTION OF THE LANCASTER MEETING.

By J. T. MICKLETHWAITE, V.P.S.A.

As I have been honoured with office of President of the Architectural Section in this meeting, it becomes my duty to say something by way of opening the business of the section. What I say must be short, partly because, for reasons I could not help, the time available for the preparation of it has been less than I should have liked, and partly because, when I have done, a paper on a very interesting subject is to be read, and I must not tire you before it comes.

The Archæological Institute is not concerned with Architecture as an art, but with the record of the past which may be preserved in it if only we know how to read it. And it may chance that a rude and ruined fragment has more value in our eyes than a perfect and stately building. It happens that such time as I have been able to give to the archæological side of architecture has lately been spent chiefly upon the rude and ruined.

At our meeting at Canterbury two years ago I tried to put into some sort of order what we know of our English churches from the end of the sixth century to the middle of the eleventh; and by means of the ground plans I think I succeeded in shewing that within that time there were several well-marked and widely-different types of church in use, and that there is good reason for placing some of these types early in the period and others later. And I take this opportunity to say a little more on the subject rather in the way of confirming former conclusions than adding new ones.

I am glad to know that the classification which I ventured to make at Canterbury has the approval of some of our best architectural antiquaries, but it is not

received every where, and we still, from time to time, see repeated such statements as that the church in Dover Castle is of Romano-British date. As to this it is enough to answer that a church planned from the beginning to have a central tower can not have been built before church towers came into use. The claim for so early a date is not one to be discussed seriously.

The claim of a like age for St. Martin's Church at Canterbury made by Canon Routledge and reasserted by him in a well-illustrated little book published a few weeks since[1] is not so unreasonable. But whilst I thank him much for his industrious examination of the building, I am quite unable to accept his conclusions concerning it.

It will be remembered that two years since, working chiefly on evidence collected by Canon Routledge and Mr. Livett, I made the first church of St. Martin to be a small example of the same type as that of St. Pancras near by; and, from the similarity of the work in the latter to that in what I believe to be the earliest part of the former, I hold that they must have been built within a short time of one another. As to the work, Canon Routledge asserts that there is a difference between the two, the walls at St. Pancras's Church being 1 foot 10 inches thick and those of St. Martin's 2 feet 2 inches thick, with "a much larger proportion of whole bricks." The difference in thickness is not important, and that in the walling I must say seems to me imaginary; but assuming that it exists, the resemblance between the two is much more remarkable than the difference. In each case we have a wall well built of bricks and mortar only, with a fair face to the outside, but many broken bricks used to fill up inside; and no such wall has yet been found in any other building claimed to be of Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon work. Till some such is found the burden of proving that these two are of different dates lies with those who assert it.

Then Canon Routledge alleges differences in the form of St. Martin's from those of other churches with which it is classed. With the plans before you you can see what the differences are, and that they are not more than

[1] *The Church of St. Martin Canterbury: an illustrated account of its History and fabric.* London: George Bell & Sons. 1898.

would be expected in churches of different sizes and built each under its own conditions. Indeed, although one is a small church and the other a large one, the resemblance of St. Martin's to the type church of St. Pancras is in one respect closer than is that of any of the others, for it has the south porch, which none of them has. Canon Routledge makes it a distinction that it has not also the north porch. But why should it have? If a church of a certain size is provided with two or three entrances, it does not follow that one a third of the size must have the same. As for the western porch—which there was at St. Pancras's, and which Canon Routledge calls a tower—it is only an assumption to say that the like did not exist at St. Martin's. But it does not matter for the argument whether it did or it did not.

Another point, not however put forward with much confidence by Canon Routledge, is the alleged former existence of a cross wall on the site of the present chancel arch and contemporary with the earliest building. The arguments for it seem to me far from conclusive, but the matter deserves further examination. It does not, however, affect the question of date; for if the wall be proved to have been there, it only makes the nave of the church shorter than I have supposed, and adds to it a chamber at the west such as may be seen at the *Old Minster* at South Elmham, built about 670.

We have, indeed, Bede's statement, "*erat autem prope ipsam civitatem ad orientem ecclesia in honorem Sancti Martini antiquitus facta dum adhuc Romani Britaniam incolerent*"[1]; but it was written three hundred miles away and a hundred years after Austin's occupation of the church. And any one who has had to do with buildings and their stories knows that half that time is more than enough for very erroneous ideas about one to grow up even on the spot and now, when the means of record are so much greater than they were then. What Bede says proves that when he wrote there were people who thought that the church of St. Martin then existing at Canterbury was a Roman building. But their opinion is of no more value than that of those who hold the same

[1] *Eccc. Hist.*, Lib. I., c. 26.

belief now, and weighs little against the positive evidence of the work which still remains for us to see.

Two years ago I said of the Old Minster at South Elmham that almost certainly it had the arcade of three arches before the presbytery, and that a little digging might prove it.

Last October, by help of our friends Canon Manning and Dr. Raven, an exploring party was formed and leave to open the ground was given by the owner, Sir Hugh Adair, Bart. Although a great deal of the walling remains, all the stone dressings, even to the quoin stones, have been picked out and carried away for use elsewhere. We therefore scarcely hoped to find any of the pillars themselves, but we found a strong foundation wall 3 feet 9 inches thick all across the opening of the presbytery; and the responds, part of each of which remains, are so far apart that a single arch bridging the space between would be quite without parallel in Saxon buildings, and the abutment at the ends would not be sufficient to receive the thrust of it. The space, therefore, must have been subdivided by pillars standing upon the foundation wall. After the visit to South Elmham I noticed, in Mr. Livett's plan of the early church at Rochester, what I ought to have seen before—that he had found evidence of the existence of a similar foundation wall in front of the apse there. So that now we have evidence of the use of the arcade of three in all the six observed churches of the St. Pancras type except in St. Martin's, which may have had it also, although from the small size of the building it seems perhaps more likely that a single arch served there.

About a fortnight since six members of the Cocked Hat Club, with our industrious Director, Mr. Emanuel Green, acting as Chairman, went down to hold an Ecclesiastical Visitation in Romney Marsh. I will not trouble you with a full report of our proceedings. But at Lydd we found some architectural remains certainly of Saxon date, and of very curious character. They now form the west end and the western part of the north wall of the north aisle of the fine mediæval parish church. They are cut about by later alterations, and obscured inside and out by plaster and patchings. But enough

remains to shew that we have here the north wall and most of the west wall of the nave of an aisled basilican church on a very small scale, the whole length of the nave being only about 26 feet inside. (Fig. 39.)[1] The north wall has had three arches, the openings between the piers being about 4 feet, and the piers plain rectangular pieces of wall about 3 feet 2 inches by 2 feet 6 inches. There are plain "stepped" imposts of two members on the soffits only, and the arches are rather wider than the openings below. The arcade is, indeed, a small model of those at Wing. Above the arcade the wall is thinned by splaying it backwards, just as it is at Brixworth and at Wing, the only two places in which we have Saxon nave arcades still standing; and above the thinning there remains visible one clearstory window. It is small and splayed outside. No doubt it is also splayed inside, but there it is blocked. Whether the middle slab remains is uncertain. The window is over a pier, and there was probably one over each. The west end is quite plain and pierced with a round arch 6 feet 6 inches wide. Assuming that this was in the middle the nave was about 16 feet wide. We have the full length, but nothing of the south side or the east end, or what may have been beyond it, and nothing to tell the width of the aisles. But enough remains to shew that we have here a very remarkable monument, and one which, by analogy of form, seems to belong to the earliest days of English Christianity. At the latest it can not be beyond the eighth century. The arch at the west end is too large for a doorway. It may have led to a baptistery, or it is possible that the altar here was at the west, and the arch that of the presbytery. The sexton remembered the repewing and repaving of the church, and, in answer to questions, said that there had been found a vault and some walls below the floor about the east end of the Saxon work, but he was not sure of their exact positions.

LYDD, KENT.

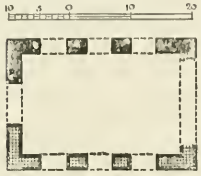

Fig. 39.

[1] The figures are numbered in continuation of those in the former paper. *Archæological Journal*, Vol. LIII, pp. 292–351.

It is just possible that there may remain something of the old presbytery there, and even of a *confessio*.

I think Lydd Church has not been noticed before as one containing Saxon work. The arches are mentioned by the late Canon Scott Robertson in *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. XIII, p. 428, but he says that they are "sharply pointed" and that they "may have been constructed at the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century."

Soon after my former paper appeared in print Mr. Robert Blair, well known as one of the secretaries of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle, wrote to me concerning Jarrow Church that "there are straight breaks at the same distance from the side walls at the present east end of the church." Both Canon Fowler and I had overlooked these; and although this evidence was scarcely necessary to prove the former existence of a presbytery east of the present building, it is very interesting to have it. Mr. Blair uses the word apse. I think a square-ended presbytery more likely, but either is possible. He hints at the ground being opened there. The chance that all has been destroyed in grave-making is considerable, but the trouble would be small and the experiment worth making. If an apse were found there it would be in keeping with what we have already noticed about Benedict Biscop mixing the Italian and the Celtic traditions.

Last year, at Dorchester, the Rev. A. Du Boulay Hill made a notable addition to our list of known Saxon buildings by calling attention to the parish church of Breamore in Hampshire. And he has since contributed a description of it to the *Journal*. It is a fine example of the Dover type and almost as complete as the church at Dover itself. (Fig. 40.) As is usual with parish churches

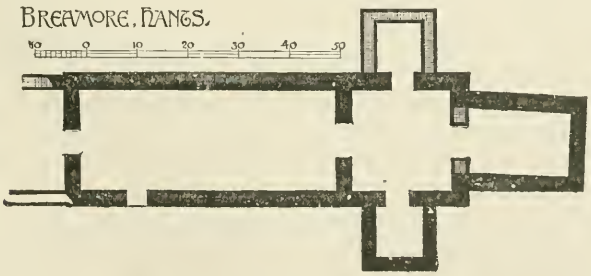

FIG. 40.

we have no written record of its building, but over the arch towards the south transept there is an inscription in letters which paleographers tell us belong to the early part of the eleventh century. This is an interesting and valuable confirmation of the date we had already given to churches of this type.

In February last Mr. Bilson wrote to me that during some alterations lately made in the old church at Barton-on-Humber the ground east of the tower had been opened and that foundations were found of a square presbytery just as was shewn conjecturally upon the plan two years since.[1] This too is an interesting confirmation, although with the proved plan of Broughton there could be no doubt as to that of Barton-on-Humber. It now remains to find the presbytery plan at Earl's Barton.

Although the Saxon west towers of late date and ordinary type are so many that they may almost be called common, something more than a local interest attaches to Mr. Park Harrison's discovery, recorded in our *Journal*, that the well known Carfax tower at Oxford was one of them, and has some of the original work still to be seen in it. I hope it may be possible to say the same when the "restorers" have done there.

On the whole, I think that the classification of church plans tentatively put forward two years since is supported by later observation, and at least it may be taken, so far as it goes, as a useful working theory. But a great deal yet remains to be done, especially in tracing the history of architectural forms and their connexion with the several types of plan. I will name one question to which I should like to have a satisfactory answer. Whence came the "long and short" rib work? We used to be told that it was imitation of wood construction, which does not seem very satisfying, and I think may be put into the same pigeon-hole as the derivation of the Gothic vault from an avenue of trees. Then it has been said that the rib is the last degenerate descendant of the pilaster of Roman architecture. This seems more plausible, but there is the diffi-

[1] I also owe to Mr. Bilson the information that there was at one time a doorway of some sort at the west end of the baptistery at Barton-on-Humber, but whether it is of any antiquity he is not able to say. That part is now uniformly covered with roughcast.

culty that the ribwork is not found in those buildings which we have reason to place earliest in date and nearest to the Italian influence.

Another matter which gives promise of much archæological sport to any one who can take it up is the tracing of the course of the transition from what we call Saxon architecture to what we call Norman. The accepted doctrine has been that the Norman was perfected abroad and was brought over here as a fully formed style about the middle of the eleventh century. But for some years the conviction has been strengthening with me that the so-called Norman grew up here in England by regular development from the Saxon which went before it. A like development was no doubt going on in Normandy at the same time, but I have had even less opportunity of tracing it there than I have at home. The free intercourse which existed between the two countries must have led to frequent interchange of ideas and probably of the workers themselves; and, whatever the earlier stages of growth may have been in each country, before the end of the eleventh century a style had been reached which was common to both. But long before that we find works which are without doubt Saxon, but which have in themselves the germs of forms which afterwards became fixed in the Norman. And they certainly are germs, and not trickings borrowed from another style. Clumsy they are and perhaps artless, but they are the work of men who were beginning to feel their way forwards. It is the darkest but yet the most important time in the whole history of Architecture—the birthday of Gothic art.

They who begin the story of Gothic with the appearance of the pointed arch are as illogical as those who begin English history with the battle of Hastings or that of the Church with the Reformation. The true beginning was when men broke away from the bondage of the Romanesque tradition and tried to go forward by themselves. Their first steps were indeed hesitating and uncertain. It could not have been otherwise after so long a lethargy. But there was in them the life and movement which was to go on till it gave us the glorious piles of York and Westminster, of Lincoln and of Wells.

It may not be possible to name the first step in the

forward march. But I am inclined to see it in *subordination;* that is, the building of an arch in a series of *orders* or rings of stone, the outer of the thickness of the wall and the inner set back from it. The earlier arches built on the Romanesque tradition went straight through the wall. But here was an entirely new system of construction, and one big with possibilities, as the succeeding ages shewed. The subordered arch perhaps did not appear much, if at all, before the eleventh century, but it did some time before the end of the Saxon period. We have it at Broughton in work which is earlier than the still Saxon work of the western stair turret; and at Barton-on-Humber, which seems for several reasons to be earlier than Broughton, we find it used with the pilaster strip and the turned baluster.

I can not follow out the story now: I rather suggest it for some one with more leisure for such work than I have.

P.S.—At Heysham, which we visited during the Lancaster meeting, the parish church has a good deal of Saxon work remaining in the west end of the nave, and there was more on the north side until a few years since, when it was pulled down for the addition of an aisle. Some of it has been set up as a quasi-ruin in the church yard. The church has been of the common plan with a nave and small presbytery. There has been a western and a northern door; and, as the approach is from the south, there was probably one on that side also. The work is perfectly plain, and there is no detail to suggest its date,[1] but, from the absence of long and short and rib work, I am inclined to think it not of the latest.

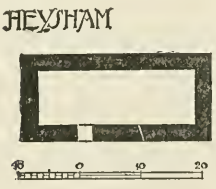

Fig. 41.

The church yard of Heysham abounds in remarkable things, but, of all, the most remarkable is the ruined chapel of St. Patrick, which crowns a rock overlooking the sea. It is (Fig. 41) an undivided oblong building 26 feet long inside by only 8 feet 9 inches wide. The walls are

[1] There is some ornamental detail about the chancel arch which has been thought to be Saxon, and the extreme rudeness and the nondescript character of the work make the opinion a not unreasonable one. But I am convinced that this arch, though taking the place of an elder and very likely Saxon one, itself belongs to the seventeenth century.

2 feet 6 inches thick, and formed of irregularly coursed rubble. There is no window at the east end, where most of the gable is standing, nor any on the north so far as the wall there remains. On the south the west jamb of a window, splayed on the inside only, remains towards the east, and towards the west is the doorway. It has straight jambs made of few stones rudely wrought and not bonded into the walling, and a semicircular head cut in one stone of irregular shape. On the outside the doorhead is scored round with three hollows or flutes, the ridges between which stand out slightly beyond the face of the stone. A rebate to fit a door to the inner side of the doorway has been formed at some time long after its first building. The western wall and the western part of the north wall are ruined to the foundations, and there is a gap between the window jamb just mentioned and the south-east corner.

I do not know anything amongst Saxon churches which is like this chapel either in plan or in detail. Its parallel must be sought in Ireland and remote parts of Scotland. The traditional dedication to St. Patrick suggests an Irish origin, and the chapel is *Celtic*, quite differently from those English buildings which, having been planned under the influence of Celtic tradition, I have called of Celtic type. I do not venture an opinion as to its date.